

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

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/053 W

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R 251740Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6818

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMCONSUL QUEBEC CITY

AMCONSUL TORONTO

AMCONSUL CALGARY

AMCONSUL HALIFAX

AMCONSUL ST JOHNS

AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

AMCONSUL WINNIPEG

UNCLAS OTTAWA 2388

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BGEN, PINT, CA

SUBJECT: QUEBEC BILL 22: LABELLING REQUIREMENTS

REF: STATE 141901

1. IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH AMCONSULS QUEBEC CITY,
MONTREAL AND TORONTO, EMBASSY WHAS DEVELOPED FOLLOWING
REPORT RESPONSIVE TO CONCERNS, WHICH EMBASSY AND
AMCONSULS SHARE, EXPRESSED IN REFTEL.

2. AMCONSUL QUEBEC CITY REPORTS AS FOLLOWS ON JUNE 23
CONVERSATION WITH CONGNIZANT QUEBEC PROVINCIAL OFFICIAL:
BEGIN VERBATIM TEXT

A. I HAD LUNCH WITH MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE
OFFICIAL PER OUR TELECON AND RELATED TO HIM POINTS IN
REFTEL WITH EXCEPTION OF 2.(2).

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B. OFFICIAL DESCRIBED WIDE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN

GOQ OVER BOTH LABELLING AND OTHER BUSINESS-ORIENTED PROBLEMS POSED BY BILL 22. THE REGIE DE LA LANGUE FRANCAISE OFFICIALLY IN CHARGE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES BUT OFFICIALS OF MINISTRY MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS AND TRYING TO PUSH THE REGIE INTO ACTION AS THEY TOO HAVE BEEN BESIEGED BY INQUIRIES. HE DOUBTS THAT ANY RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM WILL BE FORTHCOMING SOON (IN NEXT MONTH OR SO) AS REGULATIONS BOGGED DOWN IN BUREAUCRATIC QUAGMIRE. C. NONETHELESS, HE WILL CARRY OUR CONCERN TO REGIE AND ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT WHAT LATEST STATUS OF REGULATIONS IS. HE EXPECTS TO TELL ME ONLY AT END OF WEEK AS MOST QUEBECKERS NOW CELEBRATING ST. JEAN BAPTISTE WEEKEND. D. CONTACT GAVE HIS OWN OPINION THAT THERE IS NO WORRY IN NARROW AREA OF LABELLING. HE DOES NOT SEE HOW QUEBEC LAW COULD BE STRONGER THAN FEDERAL LAW WITHOUT GOING FOR UNILINGUAL FRENCH LABELS WHICH WOULD NO DOUBT BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL. HE BELIEVES THAT INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE FALL UNDER FEDERAL JURISDICTION AND NOTHING CAN BE DONE BY QUEBEC TO REGULATE IT. QUEBEC IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT FIRMS PHYSICALLY LOCATED IN QUEBEC THAN ABOUT IMPORTS FROM US. HE CONCLUDED THAT U.S. MANUFACTURERS HAVE NO NEED TO WORRY IF THEY ADHERE TO FEDERAL LAW AS QUEBEC LAW CAN BE LITTLE DIFFERENT. AT MY INSISTENCE, HE ADMITTED THAT HE COULD UNDERSTAND CONCERN OF U.S. MANUFACTURERS, HOWEVER, AS LONG AS QUEBEC REGS NOT DEFINED.

E. COMMENT: SOURCE SEEMS WELL-PLACED TO EXPLAIN ACTUAL STATE OF PLAY AND PASS ON OUR COMMENTS TO THE LANGUAGE BOARD. HE HAS ARRANGED SEVERAL SPEECHES BY HIS MINISTER TO EXPLAIN AND/OR ALLAY FEARS ABOUT BILL 22. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WILL BE IN FURTHER CONTACT SHOULD HE COME UP WITH AN UPDATED EXPLANATION OF WHAT IS HAPPENING.

END OF VERBATIM TEXT

3. MEANWHILE, FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, AMCONSUL TORONTO REPORTS AS FOLLOWS FROM CANADIAN IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION SOURCE: THE ASSOCIATION HAS LEARNED THAT THE REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT BILL 22, THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ACT OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, HAVE NOW BEEN DRAFTED AND WILL LIKELY BE PUBLISHED DURING JULY 1975. FOLLOWING PUB- UNCLASSIFIED

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LICATION INTERESTED PARTIES WILL BE GIVEN APPROXIMATELY NINETY DAYS TO OFFER THEIR VIEWS AND COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS AND REPORTEDLY THE ACT WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE SOME EIGHTEEN MONTHS LATER. (SEE WEEKLY IMPORTERS' BULLETIN OF JUNE 18. COMMENT: EMBASSY STRONGLY INCLINED TO GIVE MORE CREDENCE TO FIRST-HAND ON-THE-SPOT REPORT, OF AMCONSUL QUEBEC CITY.

4. EMBASSY'S COMMERCIAL COUSELOR AND MISS MCVEIGH DISCUSSED MATTER JUNE 20 WITH GEORGE LEWIS, CHIEF, PRODUCTS DIVISION, CONSUMER STANDARDS DIRECTORATE, DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & CORPORATE AFFAIRS (C&CA), WHO SAID HE WAS NOT TOO FAMILIAR WITH QUEBEC REGULATIONS BUT, BASED ON HIS GENERAL IMPRESSION FROM THE TRADE, DID NOT THINK EVENTUAL QUEBEC LABELLING REGULATIONS WOULD REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION. WHATEVER INFORMATION WAS REQUIRED WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE TO BE IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE. LEWIS ALSO DID NOT THINK THE QUEBEC LABELLING REQUIREMENTS WOULD BE IN CONFLICT WITH THOSE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. HE OBSERVED HERE THAT THIS WOULD, IF IT DID OCCUR, CREATE AN UNTENABLE SITUATION FOR DOMESTIC CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS, WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH C&CA ABOUT THIS. LEWIS OBSERVED FURTHER THAT THE FEDERAL AND QUEBEC REQUIREMENTS HAVE DIFFERENT OBJECTIVES (QUEBEC LANGUAGE; FEDERAL, FULL, PRECISE INFORMATION FOR CONSUMER) BUT, AS INDICATED ABOVE, THIS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THE EVENTUAL QUEBEC LABELLING REGULATIONS WOULD BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE FEDERAL REGULATIONS. LEWIS ALSO SAID THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (C&CA) HAD CONSULTED WITH ALL OF THE PROVINCES IN FORMULATING ITS LABELLING AND PACKAGING REGULATIONS. HE SAID FINALLY THAT, IN HIS VIEW, THE PROBLEM REALLY LIES IN THE NEED FOR DIMESTIC CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS AND EXPORTERS TO CANADA ALIKE TO HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE QUEBEC REGULATIONS AND THIS IN TURN UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR EARLY PUBLICATION OF THOSE REGULATIONS.

5. EMBASSY OFFICERS AND AMCONSUL QUEBEC, RESPECTIVELY, EMPHASIZED THE POINT TO THE FEDERAL AND QUEBEC UNCLASSIFIED

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PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS THAT U.S. FIRMS DESIRE TO MEET BOTH SETS OF REGULATIONS AS COMPLETELY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE AND THAT USG WISHES TO ASSIST THEM IN COMPLYING. THIS WELL RECEIVED BY BOTH FEDERAL AND QUEBEC OFFICIALS APPROACHED.

6. COMMENT; WHILE EMBASSY BELIEVES PROBLEM CAN AND WILL BE RESOLVED WITHOUT LOSS TO U.S. EXPORTERS, THIS MAY REQUIRE CLOSE FOLLOW-UP BY AMCONSUL QUEBEC CITY, WHO OF COURSE IS MINDFUL OF THIS AND, AS INDICATED PARA 2 ABOVE, WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY.
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